

STATEMENT
OF
SENATOR DANIEL K. INOUE
VICE CHAIRMAN
COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
BEFORE THE
JUNE 16, 2004 HEARING
ON THE IMPLEMENTATION
OF THE
NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT
IN
INDIAN COUNTRY

I AM PLEASED TO JOIN CHAIRMAN CAMPBELL IN WELCOMING
THE WITNESSES WHO WILL TESTIFY THIS MORNING ON THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT IN NATIVE
AMERICAN COMMUNITIES.

THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT WAS ENACTED INTO LAW
THREE YEARS AGO WITH THE GOALS OF PROVIDING ALL CHILDREN,
INCLUDING INDIAN CHILDREN, A FAIR, EQUAL AND SIGNIFICANT
OPPORTUNITY TO OBTAIN A HIGH QUALITY EDUCATION, AND OF
INCREASING THE ACCOUNTABILITY OF SCHOOLS.

YET DESPITE THESE GOALS, THE COMMITTEE HAS LEARNED
THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT IS IMPOSING A “ONE SIZE FITS

ALL” APPROACH TO SCHOOLS. THIS APPROACH IS CAUSING PROBLEMS IN INDIAN COUNTRY.

FOR INSTANCE, THE RURAL NATURE OF MANY INDIAN RESERVATIONS INHIBITS THE RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS. FUNDING HAS BEEN INADEQUATE TO MEET THE CHALLENGING STANDARDS. SCHOOLS ARE FOCUSING ON TEACHING ONLY THE CORE SUBJECTS RATHER THAN CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS. AND NATIVE LANGUAGES ARE TAKING A BACK SEAT TO THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

WITH RECENT DATA SHOWING THAT ONLY SIXTEEN PERCENT OF AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE FOURTH-GRADERS SCORE AT OR ABOVE THE PROFICIENT LEVEL IN READING, IT IS CLEAR THAT THESE PROBLEMS MUST BE ADDRESSED.

WHILE MOST AGREE THAT THE GOALS OF THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT ARE LAUDABLE AND THAT INDIAN CHILDREN SHOULD BE EXPECTED TO SUCCEED LIKE OTHER STUDENTS, WE CANNOT IMPOSE A “ONE SIZE FITS ALL” APPROACH FROM WASHINGTON, D.C..

IT DOES NOT AND WILL NOT WORK IN INDIAN COUNTRY BECAUSE OF UNIQUE CONDITIONS THAT EXIST ONLY IN INDIAN COUNTRY AND THAT VARY BY TRIBE. INSTEAD, THE REASONS FOR NOT SUCCEEDING SHOULD BE IDENTIFIED AND ADDRESSED.

IN ORDER TO FULFILL THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S TRUST RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE EDUCATION OF INDIAN CHILDREN, THE NO CHILD LEFT BEHIND ACT MUST CONSIDER THE UNIQUE NEEDS OF INDIANS, ON A TRIBE BY TRIBE BASIS. CURRICULA, TEACHING AND TESTING METHODS MUST BE CULTURALLY RELEVANT.

INDIAN CHILDREN ARE VALUABLE ASSETS. THEY ARE THE FUTURE LEADERS OF INDIAN COUNTRY. WE MUST DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO ENSURE THAT THEY RECEIVE A BROAD EDUCATION BASED ON CHALLENGING STANDARDS. EDUCATION MUST RESPECT AND ENCOURAGE INDIAN CHILDREN TO BE INDIAN CHILDREN.

MR. CHAIRMAN, THANK YOU FOR HOLDING THIS MUCH NEEDED HEARING TODAY.